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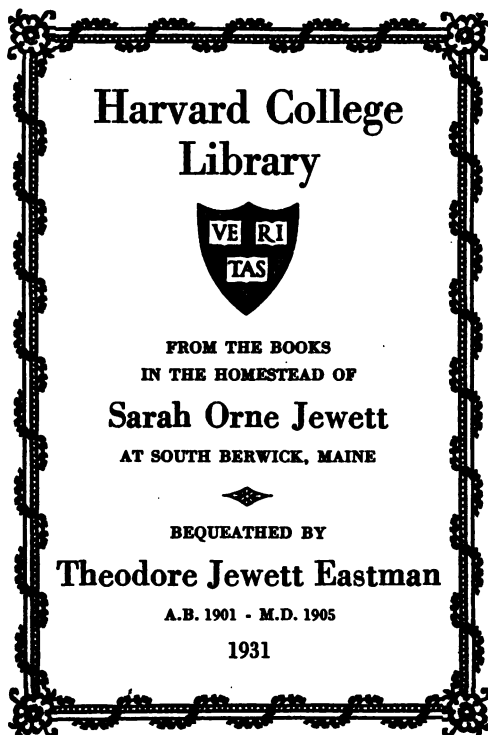
CHRISTIAN

EDUCATION

BY

Mrs. Humphrey Ward.

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NEW FORMS  
OF  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

An Address  
TO  
THE UNIVERSITY HALL GUILD

BY  
MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

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## PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

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THIS short address, which was originally delivered about six years ago to the Students' Guild of the University Hall Settlement, was published in London in the spring of 1892, and reprinted later in *The New World*. Messrs. Crowell & Co. have now undertaken an independent American edition of the pamphlet, and perhaps a few words of preface on my part are necessary.

Some small alterations have been made here and there in the style of the little paper. Otherwise I have left it exactly as it was given. During these six years, indeed, much has happened. The pressure of historical and literary criticism upon received beliefs has constantly increased, and, speaking broadly, one may say perhaps that the problems and difficulties of the Old Testament have been gradually supplanted in the mind of religious England by the problems and difficulties of the New. On Old Testament ground, indeed, there have been some rallies and diversions of great interest, even to the general public. It seems very possible that, owing to the labors of certain Assyriologists and Egyptologists, fresh light will be thrown upon portions of the Old Testament that had been prematurely or imperfectly explained by the literary critic. Many statements and sections of the Pentateuch may ultimately be shown by the archæologist to have a higher antiquity or a more definite historical



value than the critic has been able to grant ; just as the modern historians of Rome, under the influence of the same force, are coming to allow a larger measure of historical importance to Rome's primitive traditions than the founders of their science at the beginning of the century could find it in their conscience to do. The origins of human civilization are receding further and further into the past ; and the early culture of the Hebrews, itself the product of far older forces, is seen to be in all probability both more ancient and more complex than any critic of fifty years ago could have supposed.

But these incidents in the process make no difference whatever to the process itself. We shall no more return to the ideas of Pusey about the Pentateuch than we shall return to the ideas of the eighteenth century as to the historical place of Livy.

Archæology is a comparatively new 'discipline,' and it is transforming our knowledge of the ancient world. But it works for science, not for dogma ; and for one idol that it seems to replace, it brings a new and destructive energy to bear upon a score of others. Professor Ramsay's vivid and interesting work upon the Acts, for instance, based mainly on the first-hand knowledge of an archæologist, is thought to have undone a great deal of German criticism on that perplexing work. It is very possible. But in the course of his inquiry, — an inquiry which leads him to the able vindication of much historical material in Acts which had been regarded as secondary and doubtful, — he delivers himself of judgments on the early chapters of Acts which are in reality far more vital to the contentions of orthodox theory than the main *Apologia* of his book. Writ-

ing as an archæologist and a historian, he ranks the historical importance of Luke, to whom he unhesitatingly attributes both the Gospel and the Acts, very high. But from the same standpoint he tells us that the first five chapters of the Acts — the chapters which deal with the Ascension, Pentecost, the community of goods, the earliest leaders and institutions of the infant church — are on a wholly different level; that Luke derived them neither from the evidence of eye-witnesses, nor from written documents; that they “seem to float in air;” that some episodes in them excite “reasonable suspicion,” and others show the “distorting influence of popular fancy.” The archæologist, both here and elsewhere, has been warmly welcomed of late as a defender of things sacred against the rationalist critic; in reality, he has so far done the work of historical science no less effectively than his brother.

No, the work of a unifying knowledge goes on, and sustains no real check. The field, as it seems to me, with which in historical theology it is now most eagerly and energetically concerned is the life of Christ itself, — the text and interpretation of the Gospel narratives. “Why are they still so full of the Old Testament at Oxford?” said an able pupil of Dr. Harnack’s, after his first visit, a few years ago, to that university. “For us that is done with; and English students seem hardly to understand that the problems which stand now in the forefront are the problems of the Gospels.” Since then the pages of our religious periodicals and reviews show clearly enough that here, as always, England is following in the wake of Germany. “The question of questions now before English religion,” says a writer in the *Expositor* (I quote from memory, and am not sure of the

exact words), "is not so much 'How are we to interpret the words of Christ?' — but 'What *were* the words of Christ?'" A few more discoveries such as that of the *Logia* of last year, and we shall know much more than we do now of the origins of the Gospels. And meanwhile scholarship is throwing ever fresh light on the current conceptions and beliefs of the age that saw the youth of Jesus. The editions of Apocalyptic books, from the Book of Daniel onwards, which we owe to Mr. Charles, during the last few years are full of fresh and important matter. We now know in far greater detail than ever before whence came the ideas of the "Son of man," of his Messianic power and pre-existence, his relations to God, the angels, man, the "kingdom," and "the last things," which meet us in the New Testament. They were the growth of the age immediately preceding Christianity; and they conditioned the whole earliest development of the new faith, before the speculative thought of Paul or the Hellenist conceptions of the Fourth Gospel arose to mark the second and third stages in the dogmatic development of the Church. The larger part of the primitive Christian phraseology as it meets us in the New Testament was already in familiar use nearly a hundred years before the birth of Christ. The whole cycle of ideas connected with the "Son of man," "the kingdom," and "the resurrection," was so far advanced before Jesus began his ministry, that as soon as he was identified on the one side with the Son of man, and on the other side with the "Suffering Servant," the belief in his resurrection followed as a matter of course. That belief began as a dogma of speculative faith; and it gradually took the legendary or pseudo-historical form, under which we know it, during

the forty years following on the Crucifixion. While the whole conception of the Virgin Birth, which was no part of the *depositum fidei* of the first Christian generation, is more and more clearly seen in its true place among the various primitive explanations, — born now of a mistaken popular exegesis, now of Messianic poetry, now of a Hellenizing philosophy, — whereby the earliest Christian mind tried to realize to itself the nature and functions of its Lord.

Many of these contentions are not new; some of them, at least, are as old as Strauss. But they have an ever-increasing mass of fact, — much of it new fact, — and, in addition, the momentum of nearly a century's thought behind them. The transformation of some of the fundamental conceptions of Christian Europe could hardly be effected in any better time. We are, in fact, only at the beginning of that transference of the ideas of the scholar and historian to the field of practical and daily life which is the next stage before us. But year by year each Christian, learned or humble, lay or official, is more urgently called to ask himself in all seriousness what these ideas mean *for him*, what changes they involve in his relation to his Master and to God.

Let him not fear! We are on the eve of a new Christian philosophy; and if Christianity is to retain its vitality, we shall see before long many struggles over the conditions of church-membership in the various Christian bodies. But the faith of nineteen centuries has been no mere delusion. We have not so learned God. The history of these centuries themselves, of the part played therein, and the transformations suffered by that force which we call "the life of Christ," will enter into the new *symbolum fidei* wherever it appears. That the

use and development of any of the great religions — least of all, the history of the greatest — can be without organic relation to the working of the divine consciousness in the world, will be more and more incredible to the Theist of the future. “What, then, does the Lord require of me?” he will ask himself with ever-increasing urgency as he feels the compelling pressure of a new knowledge. And he will find the answer, one may conceive, now as always, in very simple things, — love and faith. Love to the most lovable thing that history contains, which is the story and character and preaching of Jesus Christ; and faith, that in so making it lovable and beautiful in our eyes, in lifting it to such a place in human life, the Divine Mind has given us one chief clew to its own nature and purposes for man; and that in calling us to the work of Christian reconstruction, the Power whose we are and whom we serve is only bidding us turn another and a fuller page of his best and tenderest lesson to us. Our part surely is simply to come to it in the temper that “puts away childish things,” and is neither afraid nor impatient of that ever-advancing communication of himself, towards which — through truth and love and hope — he draws the human mind.

MARY A. WARD.

LONDON, *January, 1898.*

# NEW FORMS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

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## I.

IN addressing you, I am somewhat painfully conscious that the title I have chosen for this little paper may well seem too far-reaching and too ambitious; that the handling of such a subject in itself appears to imply knowledge I am conscious of not possessing; and above all, a certain claim to novelty and originality of thought, to new clews of guidance through difficult paths, which I have no intention whatever of putting forward. To some, at least, of those in this room, anything I can say on such a topic will merely represent ponderings and meditations long familiar to them, probably in connection with practical needs of teaching or preaching much wider and more perplexing than anything I have myself struggled with. I can only ask such persons for their sympathy and indulgence, as any traveller may ask it of others more wayworn and more wise. And for the rest, I should wish these thoughts to be regarded as the outcome of a certain personal experience, limited in point of range, but fairly long and strenuous, and touching two sets of problems, — the problems connected with the Christian education of children of different classes

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and ages, and the problems connected in these troublous times with that lifelong education of *ourselves*, as Christian citizens, on which character and conviction depend. Of these last matters, however, I shall only have a few scattered things to say towards the end of my paper.

Every age has produced its new forms of Christian education. As Professor Green has said : "The visible church of one age is never essentially the same as that of the next; and it is only in word or to the intellectually dead that the creed of the present is the same as the creed of the past." The Calvinism of Calvin and the Genevese Ordinances is not the Calvinism of the Scotch peasant, of that delightful Thrums which a recent novelist has drawn for us, closely kindred though they be; and the Anglicanism of the eighteenth century, engaged in "hewing and chiselling Christianity into an intelligible human system, which they then represented, thus mutilated, as affording a remarkable evidence of the truth of the Bible," was very far indeed from being the Anglicanism of that far-reaching movement of fifty years ago, which chose these contemptuous terms wherein to describe the theology of the age of common sense.

To the supporters of the Holy Alliance, Catholicism meant political reaction; to Montalembert and Lacordaire, in the days of *L'Avenir*, it meant a free church in a free people. And in a generation the Catholicism of Newman, with its eagerness about speculative theory, its abhorrence of Liberalism and Liberals, its remoteness from this workaday world, and its comparative indifference as to whether there be "too many public-houses in England or no," passes into the Catholicism of a Manning, ready to join hands with any heretic so long as temperance be preached, the child protected, or the

laborer raised a step nearer to manhood. The same great words are there, as it were; but the *emphasis* changes, and with the emphasis, the leading, urgent meaning of the whole, that meaning which stirs the blood, which attaches the heart.

This, however, as we all know, is only half the truth. If there has been change, there has been also constancy. The proud device of the Catholic Church, "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*," does not rest upon mere delusion. Christianity starts from a *history*, and, broadly speaking, up to the present century the main facts of that history, and the main outlines of the dogmatic scheme in which they very early became embedded, were the same, at least for all *Christendom*, for Edinburgh and Madrid, for Rome and Geneva. The fall and natural depravity of man; the divine scheme of salvation, announced centuries beforehand by prophet and type; the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection; the presence of Christ's Church on earth, whether its essence was supposed to lie in the community of believers, or in the permanence of a traditional hierarchy; and the expectation of a future Day of Judgment, and of another life wherein man's blessedness or torment depended upon his acceptance or rejection of the salvation provided for him by God, — as to these great declarations of the Christian creed, there was practically no divergence of opinion within the limits of the Christian churches, however differently the *emphasis*, as we have called it, might lie at different times and places, and however much might be added here to be passionately rejected there. These convictions, however, rested upon two others of far less importance and interest to the every-day life of the pious heart than the touching and



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overwhelming dogmas of salvation and grace, yet everywhere taken for granted in some sense, even when they seemed to be set the one against the other, and in reality the foundations of the whole. These beliefs, as we all know, were the beliefs in the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, and in the inspiration and infallibility of the Church. The Bible guaranteed the great story of man's salvation; and the Church—in the case of the Protestant, the primitive, undefiled Church, in the case of the Catholic, the visible Catholic body under the governance of the Vicar of Christ—guaranteed the Bible.

Broadly speaking, from the second Christian century which saw them emerge up to the period following the French Revolution, that is to say, up to days within hail of our own, these great root-beliefs of Christendom remained intact. Not that the recurrent pressure of rationalism has ever been wanting to the Christian church, at any rate since the revival of the common intellectual life of Europe. In the early Renaissance, the Florentine platonist, Ficino, put forward his translations of Plato and Plotinus in order that, by "this new theology, poets may cease to count the mysteries of religion amongst their fables, and the crowds of peripatetics, who form almost the whole body of philosophers, may be admonished that religion must not be reckoned as old wives' stories." Two centuries later we shall find the great soul of Pascal wrestling with the problems of faith; while his consciousness of *les incrédules*, and what they dare to say, darkens the world for him, and turns his mind to the invention of ever sterner and sterner means of repression for the flesh and the fleshly intellect. Another lapse of years, and Butler, driven out of pa-

tience by the talk of "sceptical and profane men," whether at Queen Caroline's supper-parties or elsewhere, is penning the famous advertisement to the first edition of the *Analogy*. "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment: and nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were, by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world. On the contrary, thus much at least will be here found, not taken for granted, but proved, that any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured as he is of his own being, that it is not, however, so clear a case that there is nothing in it." What ironical force in every word, yet an irony betraying suffering born out of pain!

No. The thirty-eight most recent Defenders of the Faith, who in these last weeks have been drawing attention through the columns of the *Times*<sup>1</sup> to the currency of "certain impressions that Holy Scripture has been discovered not to be worthy of unquestioning belief, whereby the faith of many Christian people is unsettled," have had a numerous ancestry. That great process in which the Christian battle of belief is but an incident is in truth perennial. The new plant pushing against the sheath which both imprisons and protects it; this familiar figure will always remain the fittest allegory of hu-

<sup>1</sup> "Declaration on the truth of Holy Scripture," signed by Dr. Goulburn, Archdeacon Denison, and others, printed in the *Times*, Friday, Dec. 18, 1891.

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man thought in its two eternal aspects of movement and resistance.

*Nevertheless*, it is conspicuously true that, within the special Christian field, the rapidity of disintegration and reconstruction during the last hundred years has far exceeded anything previously known to the Christian world. In Lord Rosebery's brilliant sketch of Pitt, he sums up his remarks in excuse of whatever serious errors as a statesman Pitt may have committed, in these words: "He ruled during the convulsion of a new birth at the greatest epoch in history since the coming of Christ, and was on the whole not unequal to it." The sentence refers of course to the French Revolution; and the words have since clung to my mind in relation, not to the course of political evolution, but to the history of Christian belief. *The greatest epoch in history* — let us add *religious history* — *since the coming of Christ*. Is it not about that? When we look at it as a whole — the vast manifestation of new forces which had been swelling through innumerable channels, and burst forth at last towards the end of the last century for the temporary ruin and ultimate re-fertilization of great tracts of human life and thought — can we doubt that its significance in the religious field has been at least as great as in the political? *History and science* — think of what those great words meant in relation to religion before 1789, and what they have come to mean since. "The disrespect," says Mill, "in which history was held by the French philosophers is notorious. One of the soberest of them, D'Alembert, we believe, was the author of the wish that all record of past events could be blotted out." Warburton, the most truculent and confident of English apologists, and one of the worst of scholars, if we are to trust the verdicts of

Mr. Pattison and Mr. Leslie Stephen, said of that great collection of chronicles and other materials for English history in sixty-four volumes, published by Hearne the antiquary in the first third of the century: "There is not one that is not a disgrace to letters; most of them are so to common sense, and some even to human nature." The exquisite folly of the sentence is apparent enough to our age, which cannot have enough of "documents," and would give a cartload of Warburtons for another Pepys; but it expressed a very common eighteenth-century judgment. Hume's history—I take my facts from one of the ablest of the *Essays and Reviews*—sold forty-five copies in a twelvemonth; and the Deists carried on the struggle with their orthodox opponents whether as to the conformity of Christianity to nature, or as to the validity of the Christian evidences, amid a level of historical knowledge so low that it is often difficult for us who live "since the Germans" to realize it. When Lardner and Paley produced their triumphant words on Christian evidence towards the end of the century, "the materials," says Pattison quietly, "for the investigation of the first and second centuries of the Christian era were not at hand."

It is *the rise of history* in the modern sense, a rise which, broadly speaking, Europe owes to the Germans, just as, broadly speaking, she owed the revival of classical learning to the Italians, which has shaken the traditional fabric of Christian orthodoxy as nothing earlier had been able to shake it. No great conception is ever destroyed till it can be replaced. The petulant common sense of the eighteenth century did invaluable service in creating a social and political atmosphere and a cleared ground, in which the new growth of a true history and

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an enlarging science could live and develop. But in itself it was wholly barren. It could bespatter and deface the current picture of Christian reality. It could put nothing in its place, because the materials for a new picture — harmonious, intelligible, consistent — did not yet exist. Hence the easy defeat of the Deists, and the Catholic reaction in France, which triumphed so cheaply and through so poor a champion as Châteaubriand. But while Châteaubriand was writing, the founders of modern history were growing to maturity; and the first steps towards the elaboration of that new conception of the Christian reality which with every decade of the century has slowly gained, like all the lasting growths of human thought, in clearness, fulness, and convincing power, were being made.

I have no intention of entering into any detailed consideration of that long and triumphant process to-night. Let me only lay stress on one point. The attack of history and science, such as it was, upon orthodox English Christianity in the last century, was mainly carried on from outside, by men either hostile to or detached from the church. The interest of our religious history during the present century lies in nothing more than this, — that whereas the *forces* acting upon religious opinion have been no doubt largely supplied from outside, fostered by the growth of scientific or social knowledge, or generated by the diffusive influence of a great foreign learning, the *landmarks* of that action have been reared not without, but within, the church. Look back over the hundred years, — over the influence of Coleridge casting into English orthodox thought the ferments of German philosophy; over the Tractarian movement, in itself a contribution to criticism, little as its authors suspected

it, since it called attention to origins and early processes, and so prepared the way for a more radical and scientific handling of its own subjects; over the Liberal reaction marked by *Essays and Reviews*; over the Broad church movement, that "beautiful *ineffectual* angel," to make a bold transference of Mr. Matthew Arnold's saying of Shelley, "beating in the void its luminous wings in vain;" over the steady advance into this country, throughout the whole period, of German methods of thought and criticism, marked by each successive commentary and cyclopædia and church dictionary, and in the field of action by innumerable "wraths of Achilles," by battle here and expulsion there, such as we can all remember—to culminate for the time in that extraordinary transformation of religious opinion, which in my judgment has been effected during the last fifteen, nay, the last ten years.

The widespread overthrow *within the Christian churches* of the older orthodox conception of the Jewish Scriptures and of their place in Christian evidence which these years have seen, represents a change of which it is very difficult for us who stand so close to it to estimate the true philosophical importance. But it is at any rate clear that the whole order of the apologetic argument will have to be, and is being, reset. To return to those root-beliefs of Christendom so long inviolable, what becomes of the fall of man, the scheme of salvation, and the whole Pauline theology, as such, if the story of Eden and the creation is a Chaldean myth recast by Hebrew poetry and faith? What becomes of the Christian witness of psalmist and prophet, in the dogmatic sense, if the Christian, instead of resting in and triumphing by the texts which have been the tra-

ditional support of his faith for centuries, must rather spend his anxious thought in explaining and apologizing for the use in the mouth of Jesus of Nazareth of passages which he — our Master — most naturally took to be by Moses or David or Daniel, but which criticism tells us are by unknown writers of the eighth century B.C., or of the Persian and Greek and Maccabean periods? Every page in which the modern scholar, whether he hold the traditional conception of Jesus of Nazareth's place in the eternal scheme of things or no, has thrown light on the growth of the Jewish sacred literature, and on the genesis of the prophetic conceptions, on the sources and analogues, that is to say, of the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch, or the literary methods and ethical conceptions which moulded the great poetical figure of the Servant of Jahve, and the later Messianic expectations — every page of this kind is in reality a contribution to the Christianity of the future. The necessary elements, limitations, and conditions of thought, whether in the mind of Jesus, or in the minds of those who proclaimed and divinized him, are being through studies of this kind gradually determined; we are beginning to understand in rich detail whence Jesus sprang, and how it is that he and not another stands in history as the leader and symbol of a great movement of converging philosophies and kindling enthusiasms which coincided with the birth of modern Europe under the ægis of the Roman Empire, and is still capable of infinite expansion; and with the exception of some missing links between Judaism and Greek thought which, it is probable, will remain permanently uncertain, the Christian riddle, as a whole, is being read with a self-verifying accuracy and subtlety which a hundred years ago were

still among the unconceived births of time. The force of the evidence, the power of the argument, grows from year to year; and both evidence and argument are being largely supplied in England at the present time by men *holding office within the orthodox Christian bodies*. It is true that, like all their reforming predecessors, they draw a line. But such lines are and have always been among the warning examples of the history of thought. The attitude towards the New Testament of men like Canon Driver and Professor Robertson Smith, the religious arguments and critical concessions made by Mr. Gore, the able and high-minded leader of the younger school of Oxford High Churchmen, in *Lux Mundi*, seem to me to find a very competent criticism in some words of Mr. Leslie Stephen's, written years ago in a different connection:—

“A new opinion,” he says, “emerges as a rule in regard to some particular fragment of a creed. An acute thinker detects an error of logic, or a want of correspondence between theory and fact. Whilst correcting the error, he does not appreciate the importance of the principles involved. He fancies that he is removing a morbid excrescence, when he is cutting into a growth vitally connected with the whole organism. Controversies, which are afterwards seen to involve radically antagonistic conceptions of philosophy, begin by some special and minor corollary. The superficial fissure extends deeper and deeper, until the whole mass is rent in twain.”

So, in our midst, the fissure spreads and deepens. One Church Congress listens patiently to denials of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, while it meets with cries of shame the suggestion of an over-bold speaker



that the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, the famous discourse on the Mount of Olives, is in all probability an Apocalyptic fly-leaf from the days of the siege of Jerusalem. A year or two later nevertheless, the same body receives an Anglican archdeacon, pleading before it that a certain legendary element in such biographies as the Gospels, written at such a time, was to be expected, and could hardly, without a special miracle, have been avoided, with a tolerance which would surely have seemed to Newman or to Pusey the death-knell of a Church. Everywhere, in all Christian bodies, or almost all, the ear catches the same vibrations of change and new birth. It is as if the Christian conscience, pondering anxiously the evolution of texts and the crumbling of doctrines, were tremulously saying to itself, like the chief of some wandering nation who looks round a camp before leaving it on the further march of aspiration and faith, "Here — ay, here perhaps — we have no abiding city, but we seek — we *seek* — one to come."

## II.

"We seek one to come."

For us who are thrown upon this time of change, who, in the midst of it, have our own lives to guide, have to teach our children, to bear sickness, and—if you will let me strike so grave a note—to face death, is it not indeed the one important, the one essential matter that we should meet our difficulties in the spirit of these words, and not in the spirit of the laggard and the straggler who drops out of the march before he must?

Yet how many of us drop out before we must! In the midst of the wrestle which now occupies the Christian mind, how many quietly conclude simply to withdraw from it! Perplexed by questions to which they feel themselves unequal, they fall back either upon a traditional religious practice, which is divorced indeed from their intellectual life, but which soothes and shelters, or upon a complete renunciation, so far as it is possible to them, of a Christian language which they feel to be unreal, and Christian conceptions they have not the energy to reshape. Every year adds to the number of those who thus stand aside, who give up in despair what they hold to be an impossible task. "Why talk to us," they say, "of new forms of Christian education? If the great story of orthodox Christianity, with its tangible hopes and fears, is untrue, why trouble ourselves any longer with a system which has become a mere part

of history in ceasing to be the authoritative solution of life and its enigmas? Why alienate the workingman by the use of names and expressions which the recoil from bigotry or patronage has taught him to dislike and distrust? why teach our children matters which can only lead to superstition or confusion? Rather leave the whole thing alone. Trust to science and to ethics; train the sense of citizenship; cultivate the power of sympathy. The Theist, who separates himself from the special world of Christian memory and speech, does but gain a wider and freer field in which to build his own argument. And as for the man who can claim no religious certainties of any kind, let him look in the study of social obligation and its development, in the compelling facts or the piteous spectacles of life, for that driving emotion which religion used to supply."

We are all familiar with this language and this dilemma. I cannot, of course, on this occasion dwell upon it at length. Let me only say that to me, at any rate, the distrust and weariness of Christianity, which is common among some of the best men and women of the present day, is the most wasteful, the most uncalled-for surrender of its own wealth that modern life can make. In presence of a system founded, as every great and victorious religious system must be founded, on perennial needs of human nature, bound up with the hopes and sorrows, the tears, the agonies, the joys, of eighteen hundred years, which has absorbed the ethical thought of Greece and the governing power of Rome, and has added to them an emotion and an enthusiasm all its own—are we to refuse the task of collaboration in which every age has joined from the beginning, because the toil of adaptation and reconstruction laid upon our

generation is in some ways a peculiarly heavy one? Is it so little to us for whom, thanks to those who have gone before us, a new interest in and a new sense of responsibility towards our brother man is possible, that history should once for us Europeans have lifted a human life so high? — that in divinizing the sufferer of Calvary, our race should have made so vast an effort to set forever before its wandering eyes the type of truth, purity, and self-forgetting pain? In these days, when we are all so much more conscious than our fathers of hurry, and multitude, and the perpetual struggle of great interests, are we so rich in symbols, in rallying cries, which may bring some order and dignity into this “darkling plain,” “where ignorant armies clash by night”? — is it so easy to touch, to bind, to lift men, that we can turn away without an effort, without a pang, from the images, the thoughts, the aspirations, which have touched and bound and raised them in the past — which come to us, therefore, steeped in and consecrated by an unfathomable human experience?

Is not the *real* difficulty that we will not take a certain trouble — we will not, even for our children’s sake, or for the sake of those, perhaps of another class, whose starved education we, more fortunate and more responsible, may long to help from our own, go through a certain drudgery which must be faced if the old Christianity is ever to become in us something once more new and living? We do not know, we say, what weight to give to the Christian documents; we cannot see our way through the contradictions of the evidence. On innumerable points experts are divided, and how are *we* to form conclusions? What is the true significance of the life of Jesus of Nazareth? Did he regard himself as

Messiah, or Son of God, or did he not? Did he address his message to the Jews only or to the world? How are we to sift the body of his sayings, among which are many that repel us, beside a multitude which belong to the admitted best of literature and thought? If miracle is to be cut away from the life, what remains? And if the idea of a risen and glorified Saviour and the vision of an incarnate Logos are denied any present reality, what profit is it still possible for us moderns to get from the speculations of St. Paul, or from the discourses of the Johannine Christ?

These questions, it has always seemed to me, can be answered in two ways. There is the answer of the scholar, and there is the answer of the ordinary man or woman, forced to deal with the practical trust of life, and bound to let go no help that may serve them in dealing well with it. The scholar takes a lifetime, perhaps, to give his answer. He is at once the pioneer and the trustee of his brethren, and upon his faithfulness now depend the common life and thought of thousands hereafter. He cannot lay his foundations too deep, cannot take his work too seriously. But for the parent or the teacher, with only a section of time and energy to give, the case is different. Just as the young curate, talking with the accent of conviction and personal judgment to a congregation about matters with which he has no first-hand acquaintance, and on which, strictly speaking, he has no right to an opinion, is yet supported and justified, first by the needs of practical life, and next by the mass of expert opinion behind him, on which he consciously or unconsciously relies, so is it with us on our side of religious thought. In the camp of reconstruction a working opinion is no doubt harder to form,

and demands more of the individual, than is the case in the camp of tradition. Nevertheless, it is within the reach of everybody who seeks it with some conscience and earnestness. The matter is not so complex, not so difficult, as our own timidity and indolence believe. The body of expert opinion is there for us also; the books which embody it have been both multiplied and simplified of late years; and the consultation of it up to a point sufficient for the purpose is neither beyond the powers nor the leisure of any parent or teacher who feels the value and attraction of religious education. No doubt there are many books still wanted. Above all there is still wanting an English Life of Christ, which shall enrich, not the literature of popular edification, but the literature of a true and responsible knowledge. Still, what we have is amply enough, if we would only use it to the best of our ability and so far as we can, as we are indeed constantly using the available materials for judgment in other departments of life.

Let us take, in illustration, two kinds of religious teaching, — the teaching of children at home, and especially children of what is called the educated class, and teaching of the Sunday-school type, addressed to those whose book education is scanty, and leaves off early in life.

Let me speak of the last first, in a few passing words, all I shall have time for this evening. The Sunday-school type of teaching represents what is of necessity a less perfect kind of teaching than the first, — the long-continued home-teaching, that is to say, of the educated class. The time for it is less; and the contribution on the part of the taught must also, owing to the comparative scantiness of the parallel education available, be much less. My own belief is that Sunday-

school teaching among the poor cannot for some time to come — if I may so express it — be too experimental. The language of popular Christian teaching is too often a language worn and blunted by long conventional use. In training the poor the Bible has been used so clumsily and so short-sightedly that it often seems as if the best way to win a coming generation to a new conception of Christian reality must be to put the Bible aside for a time altogether. By which I do not mean, so far as the New Testament is concerned, that we should dream of putting the Christian story and the Christian material aside. Far from it. But what I should like to see would be the growth of a teaching among the less educated classes depending less and less upon the direct use of books, — even of the Bible, — and more and more upon a certain spiritual and imaginative power in the teacher. In work of this kind the Christian texts, if I may say it boldly, want to be first absorbed and then retold. By the use of words and illustrations familiar to their common life; by a vivid telling of the story in a fresh set of phrases, as far as may be, and with the help of different kinds of association; by a free employment of pictures; and by a running comparison of old with new, — of the life by the Sea of Galilee with the life of their own courts and lanes, — I believe the attention of the poor may be once more caught and held, and the Christian lessons once more enforced through a kindled imagination. But a teaching of this kind will naturally make a much greater demand upon the teacher than the old has done; and the teacher, to do it well, must himself go to school, and learn to attach a new interest and a new honor to his Sunday class and its opportunity.

With these few words of digression, on a subject which might well take an evening to itself, let me return to the field of home-teaching, and the home-teaching of what we call the educated class, as it seems to me the most important of all at the present moment, and the key of the situation. Here the parent, generally the mother, unlike the Sunday-school teacher, who must do the best he can under every sort of disadvantage, has ample time and opportunity to look forward to. If the general pressure of life and experience has cut her off from beliefs commonly received, without drying up the springs of religious aspiration, or deadening the sense of something forever beautiful and sacred in the Christian temper, she has but to give herself to a little patient thought and reading, she has but to take up her task with resolution, to find the rewards of it growing upon her with every step. Her object, let us suppose, is twofold, — first, to form an ideal in the child's mind, a vivid and perpetual image of the good, dressed in the living detail of a human story, which may become an ever-present influence on conduct and feeling. In the second place, she desires to form a link between the child and that world about it which remains so largely Christian, and in which so much of the noblest work is still Christian, and Christian of the old type. If she were to train the child on the Comtist calendar, or on pure literature, or any other of the modern substitutes for Christianity, she perceives that she would be simply cleaving a quite unnecessary division of sympathy and interests between the child and its surroundings, between it and many persons and things whom she would most wish it to love. To remain ignorant of Christian language and the voice of Christian feeling can but isolate



us from some of the best of our fellows; whereas the power of common work and sympathy is hardly impaired where two hearts hold the same image, however differently the intellect may interpret it.

So for many and good reasons she begins, as her forefathers had begun before her, with the Gospels, with the lives of Jesus. But they are to be treated as any other accounts of the life of a dead friend or saint would be treated did they present the phenomena of the Gospels, and were they to be examined week by week and day by day for the purpose of an ever-truer and closer understanding. The teacher should have two qualifications, — the interest of a student and the love of a disciple; and the lesson, to be complete, should have two parts.

There should be, first of all, the continuous study of the narrative, in which one version of a story is perpetually compared with another, parable with parable, saying with saying, and in which the teacher, by the use of a few obvious and easily accessible books, does her best to create an atmosphere and a scene wherein the whole drama may move and live with an ever-fuller imaginative truth. No one can easily realize, who has not tried it, how soon intelligent children, whose imagination and memory are developed at the same time in other fields, will learn to take delight in the effort to grasp the Christian story as reality, how quickly and simply they will feel an interest even in what we call critical questions, — the different points of view of the biographers, the probable reasons why Mark tells a story in one way, and Luke or Matthew in another; the chasm in chronology and fact and tone between the Synoptics and St. John; the history of certain additions to the

text, such as the angel and the bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane, or the troubling of the water at the pool of Bethesda, or the last twelve verses of Mark; the throwing back into the mouth of Jesus of the parables and sayings of a later preaching, embodying the ideas of a later historical situation, and so on. If such matters are dealt with as they ought to be, under the guidance of a love which sees in them the first steps towards what it seeks, the result should be to enable the child to use its own mind and imagination with increasing freedom and firmness. "It cannot have happened quite in such a way," you will find it saying to you, "because you see there is that other account; or the story is one of a kind likely to be invented; or those who wrote many years afterwards understood and described what they were told, or what they had seen, each in his different way. But it *may* have happened like this? Yes; I am *sure* it happened like this!"

And so in the end you will find the child building up its own conception, under the pressure of yours. It is very little matter indeed whether at every point it represents — this conception — the maturest critical knowledge. As we are now coming to read the Gospels, each mind will more and more form for itself its own working conception; and there are innumerable points where criticism can only clear away and illuminate, and will probably never make good a claim to dictate. But do not suppose for a moment that this comparative uncertainty as to details, which must always cling to certain portions of the story, need in the end, if your teaching is a true teaching, affect the clearness of the general conception. Minds submitted to such a training as I have sketched, and troubled by no hindering remnants of an

earlier system, make short work of the common orthodox dilemma "either God or nothing," or "either God or a man of no particular ethical importance." The figure as it was, growing distinct year by year, not by negative subtraction, but by virtue of an ever-increasing intelligence and sympathy in the beholder, becomes at last the constant and familiar friend of heart and imagination. The child and youth at Nazareth, nurtured on the high hopes and the ancient poetry of his people, yet drawn partly by a peculiar genius, partly in half-conscious accordance with a well-marked school and tendency of the day, to spiritualize and deepen the voice of prophet and lawgiver, till the old conceptions answered to the new needs of a time big with religious change and moral reform; the man of thirty torn from a silent and meditative life of humble labor by the passionate attempt of another to lay the first foundations of that kingdom of God on which he himself had brooded so long; taking up that attempt when his forerunner was silenced, and transforming it by the aid of a far richer thought and a more sensitive and disciplined genius into an ideal conception of extraordinary potency and range, and carrying that conception, together with the ethical convictions and enthusiasms which hung upon it, and had been nourished by it, into the missionary life, teaching, persuading, subduing, amid the little crowded towns of the Galilean lake; the wrestler with disease of mind and body as he and his age understood it, employing in all simplicity, and as it often seems to us with a sweet resignation, powers he could not but regard as the natural accompaniment of that spiritual power he saw and felt himself to possess, yet constantly troubled amid surroundings which made the doubt of miracle both for

himself and his followers an impossible anachronism, by the coarseness of the popular demand for miracle; the champion of the outcast and the poor, living in all the life about him, whether of nature or humanity, sensitive to the clouds, the flowers, the birds, still more sensitive to human sin and human pain, exciting love, trouble of conscience, a passionate devotion, wherever he went, with many friends and much success, and no conspicuous enemies, — there you have the first half of the picture, the first act of the drama.

But you and the child you are leading pass on, and gradually, like all the great thought and great action of the world, you see this thought and this action deepen into struggle and agony, darken into tragedy. Is he Messiah? He himself, astonished by his own influence, haunted perhaps by the suggestions and coincidences of prophecy and popular legend, and conscious alike of God with him, and of rising forces of fierce opposition, admits the marvellous, the inconceivable idea, yet feels none the less profoundly the pressure of those ethical convictions which are in truth his being. If he is Messiah, it is still only that he may minister, may be among men as servant of all, may give everything, — friends, success, life itself, if need be, — for the saving of his brethren, and the realization of the kingdom. For what is Messiah, in one aspect, but the last and greatest of the prophets? “A prophet,” said Moses, in speaking of him, “shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me;” and every age has stoned the prophets, and laid on their sacred and atoning heads the iniquity of all. For neither himself nor his mission is any retreat possible, nor, to the strung heart and will, conceivable; and yet, as his keen eye surveys what he himself calls “the signs of

the times," and measures his own resources against those of an offended and tyrannical orthodoxy, he begins, first dimly we may suppose, then with a tragic clearness, to foresee the end. His soul rises to the "great argument" laid upon it; he sets his face for Jerusalem, the sacred and beloved city, to which the prophet of Jahve naturally tends, and where each prophetic message must be ultimately delivered; and while his followers debate and plan around him, in language drawn from the current Messianic legend of the time, *his* inmost thought is rather with the Suffering Servant of Jahve, led as a sheep to the slaughter, oppressed, afflicted, dumb—stricken for the transgressions of Jahve's people. Yet he is most human; and there are moments when by a natural reaction and relief he too adopts the conceptions of the national hope, and talks of judgment and triumph, and the rule of a risen Messiah. The religious consciousness even at its highest contains always these two elements,—the transient and the permanent; and that which is to last makes its way at first in human life by virtue of that which is to pass away.

But the time for preaching in words is almost done. An *action* is before him, an action which, as in all true martyrdom, is but the natural and inevitable outcome of a compelling thought. How little in a sense we actually know of the last days! What scanty fragments from a preaching which has taken a new note alike of vehemence and of matured experience, and must have roused hundreds now to wonder and sympathy, now to fierce anger and resistance! What contradictions in the narratives, what critical and historical difficulties, even at the most touching and vital points of the story! Yet the main lines are clear. He dies for the freedom of

the spirit, for the Kingdom of God, for an ideal conception that is to say of the relations between God and man, and of man to his brethren, too great, as it would seem, at times, even for his own mortal's strength, and for the natural resources of his mortal's thought; yet *his* nevertheless, and owing to *him* — and not to Paul nor any other — the realization which it afterwards obtained in human life. For him his death is but the fidelity of the matured soul to the continuous training of life; for those about him it is first despair, and then — revelation! The first true communication of his spirit to those who had labored and wandered with him seems to have come when he could no more be touched by sympathy or cheered by love. When — incredible! — they see him die, they *begin* to understand. And when all is over, and the force of such a personality and such a death acting upon physical and mental conditions not difficult to conceive, though now impossible for us to recover in their entirety, has evolved from the sore protesting anguish, the smarting love, the reacting speculative faiths of those left behind, the burning belief of the resurrection, God and man, so to speak, have met in the founding of the most significant, and on the whole, make what deductions we please, the divinest work of human history. Light has dawned at last for the slave, the outcast, the woman, the poor; and the faithfulness of one human soul, thrown on the fitting moment of history, has evoked from the race that electric power of sympathy and passion which is to take from east to west, from the stored labor of Greek ethical thought, the ordered power of Roman life, and the moral and imaginative wealth of Jewish theistic faith, for the actual building in earth's midst of the New Jerusalem, and the practical founding of the City of God.

In these few words I have attempted the barest sketch — how full of omissions and imperfections no one knows better than I! — of the Christian reality as history is beginning to know it, beginning to impress it with a gradual and irresistible force upon the mind of Europe. I do but offer it as a point of departure for thought to those who may not have much time to read, and who may be suffering to-day, as we have all suffered, from the difficulty of forming to themselves any definite picture or image of the central Christian truth amid the conflicting clash of evidence and explanation.

One more word, however, to carry the suggestion just a little further. Of this Christian reality I have tried to sketch for you one half — the half which is concerned rather with what the Master was and did. There still remains the great and vital question of what he *said* — of that body of teaching on which many who feel themselves detached from Christian dogma tacitly fall back, but which is in reality as full of difficulties, as much in need of critical sifting and the reconstructive processes of the trained historical imagination, as the “pragmatic” portions of the documents. A great deal has been done; a great deal still remains to be done. To myself it seems clear that as parable after parable and saying after saying has been cut away from the genuine record of Jesus by processes purely critical and historical, and such as would be employed without question in any other field of the past, the figure of the Master has become ever clearer and grander. We can well spare the parable of the unjust judge, or the story of the cursing of the fig-tree. Our grasp of the tender and beautiful reality does but strengthen as sentence after sentence of personal self-assertion, moulded by the beliefs of discipleship and

the needs of a primitive preaching, fall away. We lose nothing essential by the relegation of a large number of those parables which deal with the return of the Son of man, and the course of the "last things," to a later generation and time; we positively gain by the exclusion of much Apocalyptic prophecy, which in its present form at any rate cannot possibly be the speech of Jesus. And as gradually we learn to discriminate with some firmness between forms of thought, and even an idiom of speech, which the mere study of literature shows us to belong to the world's best, and to be therefore beyond the invention of disciples, and later transformations and additions traceable to known historical causes, or to the natural play of ordinary minds under given conditions — as we learn to do this, we come so near to our Master, the eyes of the mind are so far cleared, that much is ultimately given back to us which we had begun by relinquishing in reluctance and despair. It is hardly possible, for instance, that all the Seven Words from the cross can be historical, probably very few of them are. But in the end we come to feel that whatever may be the historical truth, they have at any rate the profounder truth of poetry. Some of them at least were conceived by the generation which had stood within sight and sound of the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. Such words he — being he — must have spoken. The testimony is to something deeper far than words. It is to a spirit, a character, a life.

So in the same way with the discourses in the Fourth Gospel. The last words of Jesus to the disciples, his prayer before he leaves them, have in one sense little to do with history; in another, they are far more revealing than history ever is. They show us what, in the con-



ception of one who had at any rate come near to those who had come near to him, he must have thought and said in the hour of parting. The conception is conditioned throughout by the personality and culture of the writer, but it is still testimony of its own kind. Only character of a certain stamp could have produced the effect; and if we are able to read it in something of that spirit of high and passionate poetry in which it was written, it will take its true and right place with us as one more reflection of a sacred reality, always the same, yet taking many shapes in many minds.

Again, a number of sayings come to us as fragments, as condensations probably of larger wholes. The reader who is steeped in the Gospels, the teacher who guides his pupils week by week in the patient study of them, will find himself often venturing on reconstructions which tend at least to illuminate the irrecoverable past. "*Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden*" — what are they, those immortal words, but the rounded fragment of some discourse, recast by memory and the influence of nascent dogma, but pointing back to a primal reality so full of emotion, poignancy, beauty, that it could not be forgotten, and still under its slight though most significant disguise haunts the hearts of men? Of that reality the incommunicable phrase, the first glow, the living detail, are lost forever. But imagination may perhaps frame the bare and pale image of a logical order of thought which our fragment now represents.

"The Scribes and Pharisees bind upon men's shoulders burdens grievous to be borne — but my yoke is easy and my burden is light! — For the yoke of love is peace, and the effect thereof quietness and confidence for evermore. Take this yoke upon you — and learn of me!

For I speak unto you that I have known, I declare unto you that I have seen. These things hath the Father hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Come unto me, ye that are meek and lowly in heart! Come unto me ye that are weary and heavy laden!—I will show you the path of peace—I will give you rest!”

Such would be natural words of religious passion; in some such sort, with the magic aids of personality on the one side, and hungering need on the other, may Jesus of Nazareth have spoken. I only wish to point out to you by this passing suggestion how in these imperfect ways love may try to recover what love first concealed.

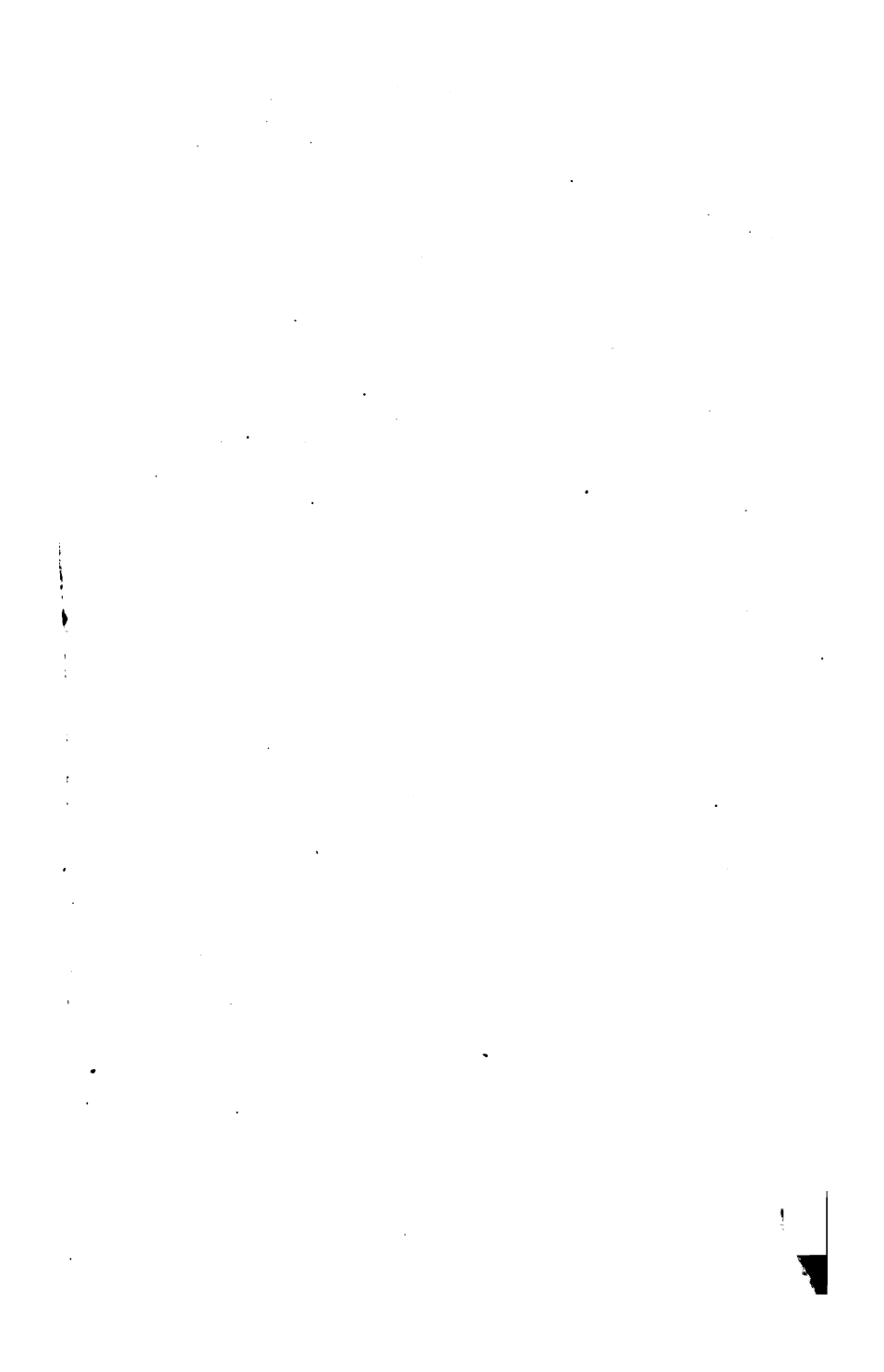
Still another point remains. I have said that the Christian teacher should throw his lesson into two parts. The first will be concerned, as we have seen, with the better understanding of the Christian Founder, and of the work begun by him in human life. The other will surely consist in the endeavor to put the special Christian thoughts and materials into connection, first with the universal thoughts and conceptions of religion, and next to bring them to bear on actual human life about us and at our doors. I can conceive a Christianity—as a system of practical ethics “touched with emotion”—without the hope of God. But you will not require of me in this place, and on this occasion, that I should spend time on so difficult a dream. For most of us, perhaps for all of us here, Christianity still claims us, because, in its best forms, it is the most moving and beautiful, the most striking and concrete testimony that history affords to the power of a Divine and Eternal Life, a life which

is perpetually revealed in conscience, law, and knowledge, and which so presses on and appeals to the human spirit that, while its action leaves the half of existence a mystery, it can yet generate, within the sphere of contact between it and man, a faith that can transfigure these passing years, and take the terror from the face of death. For those who ask teaching from us, let us so use the life of Jesus as to make out of it the most compelling and the most fruitful symbol known to our experience of this contact between God and our poor human consciousness, which is religion — let us connect with it the picture of the growth of conscience and the many-chaptered story of the human struggle for good, and we need have no fear, as it seems to me, that it will ever fail to meet religious need, or strike out spiritual response.

As to its practical bearings, they cannot be too closely or too familiarly insisted upon. As we draw the picture of the Master moving among the sins and needs, the sufferings and affections, of Galilee and Jerusalem, and as communion with him quickens in us, and in those we teach, reverence for the life of duty and of pity, let us be constantly ready to pass from old to new, from the mothers and children, the husbandmen, carpenters, weavers, the teachers and missionaries of Palestine, to the daily relations and tasks, the familiar figures of our own world. Each of those relations and duties may, if we will, be connected with the beloved and sacred name of him who stands both by inherent genius and by the irrevocable choice of men at the head of the spiritual life of Europe, and still bequeaths even to our far-off generation the maintenance and spread of his work. All things may be done to God in Christ; and that our

children should learn from us so to do them is the task of Christian education. Only in the patient struggle to fulfil it week by week, and day by day, till the education of childhood merges in the sterner education of maturity, can we hope, parent and child, teacher and taught, for the growth which alone is true life—growth in that temper at once of self-surrender and indomitable hope, which yields all that man has and does, his forms of faith, no less than the grosser claims of self and flesh, to the action of the indwelling, all-transforming God, whereof the chief representative in history is Jesus Christ.







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